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TRADITIONS

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AMPHLET CASE No. 7.

— BY —

JOSEPH POPE.

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue
that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.*

ISAIAH LIV—17.



Pamphlet No. 2.

THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
OF OTTAWA.

1891.

3x1780

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TRADITIONS.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY

On Thursday, the 17th December, 1891.

BY JOSEPH POPE.

My Lord Archbishop, Sir John Thompson, Ladies and Gentlemen :

The subject to which I desire to invite your attention for a short time this evening, is "TRADITIONS"—a wide word truly. But there are traditions of many kinds, and it is of only one class of these that I propose to speak.

I do not, for instance, intend to refer to the common law of England, by which we are governed, nor to the Constitution under which it is our happiness to live, both of which are great and venerable traditions, transmitted to us by our fathers, and held in equal veneration by all classes in the community. Nor shall I say anything here of that living stream which has flowed beside the Catholic Church for so many centuries; which connects us with every age, and us and them with the beginning of the

Christian dispensation. Nor again, shall I dwell on that great tradition, which is the corner stone of Protestantism, the denial of all tradition—the doctrine that the Bible is the sole rule of religious belief and practice, and that everything bearing on Christian faith and worship which is not to be found within its four corners, is to be regarded as the doctrine and commandment of men. My concern is rather with certain historical traditions, which are tenaciously held by those who reject the claims of the Catholic Church, and which form with many persons a principal reason for such rejection.

There are, as I have said, many traditions. There are true traditions, and there are false traditions; and they are true or false, according to the truth or falseness of their origin. As no stream can rise higher than its source, and as the strength of a chain cannot exceed that of its first link: so the authenticity of any tradition must depend upon its first beginnings.

Now there are certain popular traditions held in our midst to day, which, in the cause of truth, I would fain see shattered. They are wide spread. They have been implicitly believed for generations. They are received as absolute truth by thousands; and they form, among English speaking people at any rate, an immense obstacle to the Catholic religion. So long as they are accepted as facts, it is almost useless to look for the extensive spread of Catholicism amongst us. It is, therefore, all important, in the cause of truth, that they be shewn to be unfounded. Let us then make some enquiry concerning them.

The first tradition that I am going to examine, is the belief, widely held among those who reject the claims of the Catholic Church, that, previous to the time of Martin Luther, the Bible was practically an unknown book, and would have continued to be so, had it not been providentially discovered by Luther in the town of Erfurt, in Germany, about the year 1507. The circumstances of this discovery are set out in great detail in what I may call the authorized version of this tradition. A picture not

infrequently accompanies the letter press. A monk is seen amid gloomy surroundings—emblematical, I take it, of the spiritual condition of his time,—eagerly reading a large copy of the Holy Scriptures, which is chained to a desk. Wonder and delight are depicted in his countenance as he proceeds, and we are told that he read, I think, as far as the book of Samuel, on this the *first* occasion of his meeting with the Bible, so charmed was he with this previously unknown treasure.

Many of you, I am sure, have no conception of the strength and vigour possessed by this tradition. It is a first principle with thousands; if you deny it you are set down as a very ignorant person, or a very untruthful one. Yet the story itself is by no means symmetrical. I recollect when ten years old, wondering how the authorities of the monastery could have been so imprudent as to leave the Bible right in Luther's path, and actually to chain it to a desk in a library so that it might not be taken away, but remain to be read by him, and any other passer by. My youthful intelligence struggled vainly to solve this difficulty. For, observe, my first principle was that the monks wished to conceal all knowledge of the book. The subject continued to have an attraction for me, and as I grew older I followed it up. I confined my reading exclusively to non-Catholic historians, but they were quite sufficient to solve my difficulty by shewing me that my first principle was false. I found that the whole story was an absurd invention. That at the time Luther was said to have discovered the Bible, printed copies of that sacred book had been for many years disseminated throughout Germany, and that Luther himself must, as a monk, have been in the habit of repeating long passages from it every day of his life.

The Reverend Dr. Maitland, a distinguished clergyman of the Anglican Church, and sometime Librarian of Lambeth Palace wrote a book a few years ago on the "Dark Ages", in which he shews pretty conclusively, it seems to me, that the dark ages were not so very dark after all. In

this book he treats among other things, of the condition of literature in mediæval times, and is thus led on to take up the story we are now considering. He makes a most patient examination into the whole subject, and here are his conclusions (the italics are the author's):—

“To say nothing of *parts* of the Bible, or of books whose *place* is uncertain, we know of at least *twenty* different *editions* of the *whole* Latin Bible *printed* in *Germany* only before Luther was born. These had issued from Augsburg, Strasburg, Cologne, Ulm, Mentz (two), Basil (four), Nuremberg (ten), and were dispersed through Germany, I repeat, before Luther was born; and I may add that before that event there was a printing press at work in this very town of Erfurt, where more than twenty years after, he (Martin Luther) is said to have made his ‘discovery’? Some may ask, what was the Pope about all this time? Truly one would think he must have been off his guard; but as to these German performances, he might have found employment nearer home if he had looked for it. Before Luther was born the Bible had been printed in Rome, and the printers had had the assurance to memorialize his Holiness, praying that he would help them off with some copies. It had been printed, too, at Naples, Florence, and Placenza; and Venice alone had furnished eleven editions. No doubt we should be within the truth if we were to say that beside the multitude of manuscript copies, not yet fallen into disuse, the *press* had issued fifty different editions of the whole Latin Bible; to say nothing of Psalters, New Testaments, or other parts. And yet more than twenty years after (Luther’s birth) we find a young man (Martin Luther) who had received ‘a very liberal education’, who ‘had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt’, and who nevertheless, did not know what a Bible was, simply because ‘the Bible was unknown in those days!’”

This seems conclusive as regards the Continent. Let us see how matters were in England. Again I shall quote an Anglican Clergyman of repute,—the Reverend J. H. Blunt, M. A. of Oxford, who in his work on the “Reformation of the Church” is constrained to say:—

“There has been much wild and foolish writing about the scarcity of the Bible in the ages preceding the Reformation. It has been taken for granted that Holy Scripture was almost a sealed book to clergy and laity, until it was printed in English by Tyndale and Coverdale, and that the only real source of knowledge respecting it before then was the translation made by Wickliffe.

"The facts are that the clergy and monks were daily reading large portions of the Bible, and had them stored up in their memory by constant recitation: that they made very free use of Holy Scripture in preaching, so that even a modern Bible reader is astonished at the number of quotations and references contained in mediæval sermons: that countless copies of the Bible were written out by the surprising industry of cloistered scribes: that many glosses or commentaries were written which are still seen to be full of pious and wise thoughts: and that all laymen who could read were, as a rule, provided with their gospels, their psalter, or other devotional portions of the Bible. Men did, in fact, take a vast deal of *personal* trouble with respect to the production of copies of the Holy Scriptures: and accomplished by head, hands and heart; what is now chiefly done by paid workmen and machinery. The clergy studied the Word of God, and made it known to the laity: and those few among the laity who could read had abundant opportunity of reading the Bible, either in Latin or in English, up to the Reformation period." 2.

Yet in spite of evidence such as this, the fable I speak of has had, and continues to enjoy conspicuous success.

But do not let us be too severe upon those who, without the leisure or the learning of a Maitland or a Blunt, have never investigated the subject for themselves. It is no part of my business to apologize for them, yet there is this much to be said. *One* argument does exist for the tradition that Luther had no acquaintance with the Scriptures. It is simple, plausible, and it is *one*. That argument is himself, as depicted in his writings. Listen to one of his religious meditations, and then judge if it does not furnish some excuse for the belief that the author was a stranger to the gospel of Christ.

"I am sometimes so cold" writes he, "that I cannot pray. Then I stop my ears and say God is not far from me, and I must invoke and call on Him. Then I set before my eyes the ingratitude and abominable life of my contradictors, the Pope, his set and his vermin; that warms me up and I flame with rage and hate—so begin Hallowed be Thy Name. That is how my prayer kindles. I have no better auxiliary than rage and passion; that refreshes my prayer, sharpens my spirit, and drives away all thoughts of discouragement and doubt." 3.

2. "The Reformation of the Church of England" by the Rev. J. H. Blunt, M. A. F. S. A. Ed. 1878. Vol. I. pp. 301-2.

3. Oper. Luther. Ed. Walch, XXII. 1237. Quoted by the Reverend S. Baring Gould, M. A., in his lecture on "Luther and Justification" delivered in 1871.

Let us now proceed to examine into another tradition, which has even a stronger hold, if possible, than the one of which I have been speaking, upon the credulity of those who accept both with an unquestioning faith. I mean the tradition respecting the condition and influence of the Papacy during the middle ages. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that the ordinary, common, every-day-belief of those among whom these traditions are rife, is that at the beginning of the sixteenth century the state of Europe was lamentable in the extreme;—that religion had well nigh died out of the world;—that ignorance and violence abounded; and that (and this is the point) the Papacy was largely to blame for the miserable condition of affairs;—Rome was a centre of profligacy and corruption, and the Popes were among the vilest of mankind. Briefly, this is what is called by those who hold it, the orthodox view; and you are looked upon as either ignorant or disingenuous, if you question the faithfulness of the picture.

Now, in the first place, I venture on general grounds, to differ from those who hold these extreme views as to the 'darkness' of the middle ages.⁴ I question very much if our ancestors were so far behind us as is commonly supposed. We form our opinions of them from history, and our histories as a rule, are greatly abridged, being largely a record of sieges and battles, murders and court intrigues, and popular discontents, and such like. According to them, people in past times seem to have been doing little else than killing each other. When we put down our book, we do not always reflect that our guide, in order to survey the course of centuries in a few pages, necessarily has had to confine himself to recording only the great and exceptional events of those times. The historian dwells on these things, because they are dramatically interesting, but if we want to ascertain what manner of men our forefathers were, and how they thought, and worshipped

⁴ The term 'Middle Ages' is here used in its loose, conventional sense as including the 16th century.

and lived and worked, and amused themselves, we must go deeper than most histories take us.

Opinions will differ as to the conditions of mediæval life. To some that life was not without a certain charm. Steam, electricity, the daily newspaper, and all the mechanical developments of our modern civilization are very convenient things, but after all, their enjoyment is not the *summum bonum* of existence. If we want examples of the highest types of human intelligence and industry and skill, it is in the middle ages we must seek them. Who were the greatest poets? who the most famous painters? who the most skilful architects? who the most renowned sculptors? who the most profound thinkers that have adorned humanity? Were they not of that period contemptuously spoken of as the 'dark ages,' or of the still more distant past?

But the point of the tradition that we are examining is not so much that the middle ages were ignorant and dark, as that the cause of their darkness and ignorance was the Church of Rome, whose ecclesiastical system oppressed and deceived mankind. That is the popular tradition. Let us see how much truth there is in it.

In order to shew that the Holy Scriptures were widely known at the time of Luther, I quoted two distinguished Anglican clergymen. I now propose to take a high Scotch authority.

Professor Bryce, whom you know as a leading member of the Imperial Parliament, and the author of the "American Commonwealth" says, in his scholarly work on the "Holy Roman Empire", in speaking of the middle ages.

"Now of the Visible Church the emblem and stay was the priesthood; and it was by them, *in whom dwelt whatever of learning and thought was left in Europe*, that the second great idea, etc., etc." 5.

And if he be not sufficient, let us take Hume, who is

generally known to have been a violent opponent to everything Catholic.

"It must be acknowledged", says Hume in his History of England, speaking of those early times, "that the influence of the prelates and clergy was often of great service to the Public." 6.

Again.

"To the Catholic clergy is altogether to be ascribed the pure and truthful transmission of history."

And listen to him once more—7.

"This Island (Britain) possesses many ancient historians of good credit, as well as many historical monuments; and it is rare that the annals of so uncultivated a people as were the English, as well as the other European nations after the decline of Roman learning, have been transmitted to posterity so complete, and with so little mixture of falsehood and fable. *This advantage we owe entirely to the clergy of the Church of Rome.*" 8.

So that, so far from the Church of Rome being a bar to civilization, it is a fact, vouched for by Hume himself that those who cry out the most against her influence in the middle ages, actually owe it to the Catholic Church that they have any accurate knowledge of the middle ages at all. So much for the general question.

Now for the Popes. What manner of men were they? Were they rapacious and profligate and cruel, as asserted by the holders of these traditions? Let us see.

St. Peter, I presume will pass muster. So also will St. Clement, of whom St. Paul says that his name is in the Book of Life. But we cannot go through the whole list.

It is, I think, fair to assume, on the principle that it is darkest just before dawn, that Papal corruption was at its height in the times immediately preceding the Reformation. Indeed we are told this again and again. Let us then take Pope Leo X, who was the contemporary of Luther, and as we have quoted from Hume, let us see what that hostile critic could say of him.

6. Hume. "History of England, Ed. 1843, Vol. I. p. 326.

7. *ib.*

8. Hume, "History of England" Ed. 1848. Vol. 2, p. 474.

"Leo X," writes Hume, "was one of the most illustrious Princes that ever sat on the papal throne. Humane, beneficent, generous, and affable; the patron of every art, the friend of every virtue." 9.

And of his successor, Adrian 6th, he says—

"His character was distinguished by 'integrity, candour, and simplicity of manners.' 10.

There is another great Protestant authority on the subject, whose opinion ought to be of weight. I mean Leopold Von Ranke, the author of the History of the Popes, concerning which Lord Macaulay says that it is "an excellent work, written in an admirable spirit, equally remote from levity and bigotry—serious and earnest, yet tolerant and impartial."

"Leo X" says Ranke, "was full of kindness and sympathy: he rarely refused a request, or if he did, it was in the gentlest manner, and only when it was impossible to grant it. 'He is a good man' says an observing ambassador to his Court, 'very bounteous and of a kindly nature.'" 11.

Of Adrian 6th, Ranke says—

"It was long since the election had fallen on a man so worthy of his high and holy office. Adrian was of a most spotless fame: upright, pious, industrious, of such a gravity that nothing more than a faint smile was ever seen upon his lips, yet full of benevolent, pure intentions; a true minister of religion." 12.

Of Clement VII, the successor of Adrian, he says—

"Everything about his Court was conducted with prudence, and his own conduct at least, was marked by blamelessness and moderation." 13.

And so I could go on, but I think I have said enough to shew you what, no doubt, you already know in a general way, that the Protestant tradition as to the effect of the Papacy upon Europe in the middle ages, and as to the lives of the occupants of the Papal chair, is a huge calumny. The truth is that the Church of Rome wielded great influence over the minds of men in the middle ages,

9. Hume History of England, Ed. 1848. Vol. 2, p 581.

10. *ib.* Vol 3, p 32.

11. Ranke's History of the Popes. Ed. 1847. Vol 1, p 48.

12. *ib.* p 63.

13. *ib.* p 67.

and she exercised it always on the side of justice and morality.

"The spiritual Supremacy arrogated by the Pope" says Lord Macaulay "was in the dark ages, productive of far more good than evil," ¹⁴

And Lord Macaulay never said more in favour of the Church of Rome than he could help.

So too with the occupants of the Papal throne. I do not for a moment pretend that, during the long course of nineteen hundred years, history does not represent some Popes as having been unworthy of their high calling, and that some things did not happen which Catholics might wish had been otherwise; but these were the rare exceptions, and I state my honest conviction when I say that the general tenour of the influence of the Papacy, in the times of which we speak, has been greatly for the advancement of human society. It has ever been less fierce than the nations, and in advance of the age. It has ever moderated the strife between contending monarchs, and promoted the spiritual and intellectual welfare of their subjects.

Who was it, confining ourselves to our own country, who excommunicated King John, because he oppressed his people, and forced him to accept an Archbishop of Canterbury whose name is foremost on the roll of Magna Charta?

A Pope of Rome!

Who was always the determined foe of slavery, and caused its abolition in England? ¹⁵

The Roman Church!

Who championed the cause of morality, and of the sanctity of the marriage tie, in the face of a proud and tyrannical King, whom Hume confesses, the Pope had the strongest motives to gratify. ¹⁶

Again a Pope of Rome!

There is yet another tradition I had in my mind to examine, and concerning which I feel I must say some-

¹⁴. Hist. Eng. Vol. I, p. 9.

¹⁵. Macaulay, Hist. Eng. Vol. I, pp. 23, 24.

¹⁶. Hume Hist. Eng. Ed. 1848, Vol. 3, p. 66.

thing, though I greatly fear that the limited time at my disposal will prevent me from dealing with so large a subject in anything like a satisfactory manner.

I refer to the tradition, very general in its acceptance, which teaches that the Roman Church in mediæval times joined to gentler vices a spirit of savage and relentless cruelty,—that it, the Church, as distinct from individual members thereof, persecuted with the utmost ferocity those whose only crime was a desire to worship Jesus Christ in the purity of His gospel, of whom the Lollards in England, the Huguenots in France, and the Anabaptists in the Netherlands were conspicuous examples.

Like the story of Luther, and indeed closely associated with it, this subject has always attracted me. The result of my investigation into it has been to lead me to believe:—

1. That the acts of cruelty commonly laid at the door of the Church of Rome are, in respect of their number, and without regard to the question of responsibility, greatly exaggerated.

2. That the overwhelming majority of persons who really suffered, according to this tradition, for conscience sake, were rebels against the governments to which they owed allegiance, and suffered for sedition and treason against the state, which oftentimes they chose, for purposes of their own, to identify with rebellion in the spiritual sphere.

3. That the punishments inflicted on Lollards, Huguenots, Anabaptists and others were largely in the nature of reprisals, and were imposed by civil or military authorities, some of whom were actually at open war with the Papacy at the very time in which those things happened, for which it is now sought to hold the Roman Church responsible.

4. That the testimony of all history goes to shew that in any event, it does not lie in the mouths of the spiritual descendants of the Reformers to accuse the Roman Church of persecution for conscience sake.

I now propose briefly to indicate some of the reasons on which the foregoing conclusions are based, and I think our present purpose will be more effectually served by my doing so in the very words of non-Catholic writers.

1. First then, that the acts of cruelty complained of are, in respect of their number, much exaggerated.

There is, or there was, for he died last year, a clergyman of the Anglican Church who has been a good deal quoted in Ottawa of late by certain high Protestant champions. These gentlemen in so doing betrayed their ignorance of the man and his writings as a whole, to the quiet amusement of those who were better informed. For it seems to me that, if there is one name in English literature which Protestantism would do well to avoid, it is that of Richard Frederick Littledale.

The subjects of which we are speaking always had a fascination for him. A student from his youth, it was not long before he discovered the falsity of these and similar traditions. His blood boiled, he tells us, when he reflected upon the monstrous fables with which his mind, and the minds of tens of thousands of English children, had been imbued, more particularly with regard to the lives and characters of the leaders of the Reformation in England. He gave himself heart and soul to the task of placing the true story of those times before his fellow countrymen. The investigation cost him ten years of hard labour, but it was not in vain, nor did it benefit himself alone.

The point on which we are immediately interested did not escape Dr. Littledale. This is what he has to say about it.

"I hear that the question, 'why were our martyrs burnt?' is being put now by some of the admirers of the sufferers under Mary I, and I will help you to answer it. In the first place the penal code of that day was exceptionally savage in its punishments, and indeed, the barbarity of our laws in this respect endured for a very long time. Till the last century, the penalty for coining was boiling alive, and the stake was (up to 1791) the legal fate of wives convicted of murdering their husbands. Far more persons were executed, within living memory, for offences now visited with short

terms of imprisonment, than died under the treble charge of treason, blasphemy and sacrilege, in the reign of Mary Tudor. The total number of victims for religion, in her time, of whom there is a list (taken from Foxe, who may have surreptitiously swelled it, but who certainly never bated one name) in the Appendix to Dr. Maitland's *Essays on the Reformation* was two hundred and seventy-seven, not quite half the number of the Spanish garrison of Smerwick, whom Sir Walter Raleigh murdered in cold blood, after capitulation, in Elizabeth's reign and with her full approval. The number who died at Elizabeth's own hands for clinging to the religion of their fathers (and that more painfully than by burning) was, at the lowest computation, three hundred and seventeen. And whereas Mary's victims, when swollen to the fullest list that can be made, amount to only about three hundred, those whom Elizabeth slew for causes undoubtedly bound up with religion, though ostensibly classed as treason,—keeping actual treason apart,—cannot be estimated at less than five or six times that number." (17.)

Again:—

"The third point to which I wish to direct your attention is that you cite, as an example of prejudice on my part, that I compare Elizabeth's three hundred and seventeen victims with Mary's two hundred and seventy seven, without warning my audience that Mary's were crowded into *four* years and Elizabeth's spread over *forty five*. The answer is to my mind conclusive, and I believe it will be so to yours. Mary's list is well-nigh exhaustive. Half a dozen political executions, arising out of the three conspiracies against her, are the most that can be added to her account. Elizabeth's list, so far from being exhaustive, contained only those against whom no charge was brought save that of their religion. I omitted from it purposely all those who, though dying for their creed, were falsely declared by Cecil and Walsingham to have been convicted for treason. If all such were added the list would be swollen to thousands; if the victims massacred in the North and in Ireland for the same cause are further attached to the damning catalogue, Elizabeth's religious murders will not fall short of fifty thousand men, women and children. And there is one little fact

17. Lecture on "Innovations" delivered at Liverpool on April 23rd 1868 by Richard Frederick Littledale, LL. D., D. C. L., Priest of the Church of England, London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1868.

Concerning this letter Dr. Littledale writes (*vide* his letter to the Rev. J. G. Caza-
nova, published in the Church Times of the 24th September 1869.)

"I am no longer a very young man or a very inexperienced one, and you may rest assured that I had that thought before my mind when I was planning and preparing the lecture itself. First, I must acquit myself of the suspicion of haste. Every epithet which seems most startling, every phrase which reads as though the outcome of sudden excitement, was deliberately weighed, deliberately written, deliberately adopted, after the three-fold correction of the Press, after submission of the proofs to the judgment and revision of three friends before I proceeded to Liverpool at all."

not to be forgotten, that she, by virtue of her authority in Council, revived the illegal torture of the rack, which Mary did not apply to her most embittered foes. So that Campion suffered what Cranmer was spared." 18

I regret that time will not allow me even to allude to the Inquisition (upon which a good deal could be said) further than to shew that in regard to it also the grossest exaggeration prevails.

Dreadful (says Hetele)† is the conception we form of an *auto da fè* (actus fidei), that is an act of faith, as if it were naught else but a prodigious fire and a colossal *spit*, round which, every quarter of a year, the Spaniards sat, like cannibals, to revel in the roasting and broiling of some hundred wretches. But I will take the liberty to assert that, in the first place, an *auto da fè* did *not* consist in burning and slaying, but partly in the acquittal of those falsely accused, partly in the reconciliation of those repentant with the church; and that there were many *autos da fè*, at which nothing burned but the wax taper, which the penitent, in token of his rekindled light of faith, bore in his hand. Llorente, for example tells, in proof of the great zeal of the Inquisition, of an *auto da fè* at Toledo, on the 12th of February, 1486, at which not fewer than seven hundred and fifty culprits were punished. Among all these, however, *not one* was executed, and their penalty was nothing more than a public Church penance. A second great *auto da fè* again took place at Toledo, on the second of April of the same year, where there were nine hundred victims, and of these nine hundred, not a single individual received capital punishment. A third *auto da fè*, on the first of May of the same year, comprehended seven hundred and fifty persons; and a fourth on the first of December following, as many as nine hundred and fifty; yet not a single execution occurred. Altogether, three thousand three hundred persons must, at that time, at Toledo, have done ecclesiastical penance, while twenty

† *Der Cardinal Ximenes*, XVII, H. S., 322, 323.—For this extract the translation is used in the Dublin Review of October, 1852.

18. Letter to Rev. J. G. Cazenove, quoted above.

seven only were sentenced to death; and Llorente would certainly not misstate the numbers to favour the inquisition †

2 & 3. That the great majority of Lollards, Anabaptists, Huguenots, etc. who suffered, according to this tradition, for conscience sake, were rebels against the governments to which they owed allegiance, and suffered as such, sometimes violently and by way of reprisal, sometimes under due forms of law, at the hands of civil or military authorities, who were not infrequently at open war with the Papacy at the very time at which these things occurred, for which it is now sought to make the Roman Church responsible.

"Everybody knows" writes Dr. Littledale "that there was a horrible massacre of the French Protestants on St Bartholemew's day, 1572, but few know that the atrocities which the Protestants themselves committed at Beaugency, Montauban, Nismes, Montpellier, Grenoble and Lyons, equalled, if they did not exceed that terrible crime." 19.

From the churchman, let us turn to the lay historian, and who in all the world of letters is there, one should think it less likely that a Roman Catholic, in defence of his Church would appeal to, than to Hume; nevertheless to Hume let us go.

"Wherever the Huguenots prevailed, the images were broken, the altars pillaged, the churches demolished, the monasteries consumed with fire: Where success attended the Catholics, they burned the bibles, rebaptized the infants, constrained married persons to pass anew through the nuptial ceremony; and *plunder, desolation and bloodshed, attended equally the triumph of both parties.*" 20.

Yet all the evils and crimes committed by one side in this fratricidal war, which so long desolated France, are popularly supposed to have been instigated by the Catholic Church, while the Huguenots, we have been taught from our childhood to believe, occupied throughout that dreadful time, the attitude of those martyrs of old who, with folded hands and uplifted eyes, calmly awaited death in the Roman amphitheatre.

† Llorente, t. i. p. 238, n. v.—vii.

19. Littledale—Lecture on "Innovations."

20. Hume, Hist. Eng. Ed. 1848. Vol. 3, p. 426.

So too, we have often heard of the cruelties of the Spaniards under Alva in the Netherlands, the whole responsibility for which is commonly laid at the door of the Church of Rome, though so pronounced a Protestant writer as Motley testifies that Alva's soldiers robbed the Churches, trampled the Holy Eucharist under foot, poured the sacramental wine on the ground, and committed numberless sacrileges and abominations too shocking to be recorded; ²¹ and we are asked to believe that these ruffians were animated by zeal for the Catholic religion!

Of the Anabaptists of this period, Motley remarks "that their leaders were among the most depraved of human creatures, as much distinguished for licentiousness, blasphemy and cruelty, as their followers for groveling superstition: ²² while every student of English history knows right well that Lollardism was the common name of those who were in their day what the Chartists, Socialists, Anarchists and other like disturbers of society are in our own. ²³

4. That in any event it does not lie in the mouths of Protestants to accuse the Roman Church of persecution for conscience sake.

"Though the Protestant Divines" says Hume, "had ventured to renounce opinions deemed certain during many ages, they regarded, in their turn, the new system as so certain that they would suffer no contradiction with regard to it; and they were ready to burn in the same flames from which they themselves had so narrowly escaped, every one that had the assurance to differ from them." ²⁴

This extraordinary inconsistency is thus commented upon by Professor Bryce in his work on the Holy Roman Empire from which I have already quoted.

"Persecution which might be at least excused in an infallible Catholic and Apostolic Church, was peculiarly odious when practised by those who were not catholic, who were no more apostolic than their neighbours, and who had just revolted from the most ancient and venerable authority in

²¹. Motley Rise of the Dutch Republic, Ed. 1856, Vol. 2, pp. 408-9. *et passim*.

²². Ib. Vol. 1. p. 79.

²³. Green, Short History of the English people, Ed. 1882, p. 272.

²⁴. Hume—Hist. Eng. Ed. 1848, Vol. 3 p. 266.

the name of rights which they now denied to others. If union with the visible church by participation in a material sacrament be necessary to eternal life, persecution may be held a duty, a kindness to perishing souls. But, if the kingdom of heaven be in every sense a kingdom of the spirit, if saving faith be possible out of one visible body and under a diversity of external forms, persecution becomes at once a crime and a folly. Therefore the intolerance of Protestants, if the forms it took were less cruel than those practised by the Roman Catholics, was also far less defensible; for it had seldom anything better to allege on its behalf than motives of political expediency, or the mere headstrong passion of a ruler or a faction to silence the expression of any opinions but their own." 25.

And Hallam, the historian, closes his elaborate investigations into the subject with these words, which many would do well to learn by heart :

"In men hardly escaped from a similar peril ; in men who had nothing
"to plead but the right of Private Judgment ; in men who had defied the
"prescriptive authority of past ages and of established power, the crime of
"persecution assumes a far deeper hue and is capable of far less extenuation
"than in a Roman inquisitor." 26.

Let me now sum up these few necessarily brief and incomplete observations. It has, I think, been made clear, from the testimony of leading historians, that these popular traditions, which embody the gravest charges against the Roman Church, have no foundation in fact.

This has been done without any unfair or disingenuous use of quotation. It will be observed that on every point the concurring testimony of at least two independent historians has been given, and while had the occasion permitted, that number could have been indefinitely increased, and the quotations made more full, those that are given have been selected in the fairest possible manner, and in every case express the views of the writer upon the point at issue. They are, it is submitted, ample to prove the lack of historical basis for the charges urged every day against the Catholic Church.

And all this has been done independently of a single Catholic authority. Maitland and Blunt, Hume and Ranke,

25. Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, Ed. 1866, p. p. 365-6.

26. Hallam *Constitutional History*, Ed. 1827, Vol I, p. 104.

Bryce and Hallam, not one of these men belonged to the Catholic Church. All of them were scholars—some of them of the highest literary distinction. Is it not remarkable that in the face of their united testimony, the traditions of which I speak continue to thrive?

Why is this so? My explanation is as follows:—I have said that these historians were eminent men. So they were; and I make bold to think *it is because of their very eminence* that they fail to appeal to those who find pleasure in accepting such perversions of history as we have been considering.

Men who have never opened the pages of Lecky or Ranke, or Hume or Hallam, in their lives, will eagerly peruse and treasure up in their memories the lying statements of popular writers, such as the author of that delectable treatise "The Book of Martyrs," concerning whom Dr. Littledale does not scruple to say that

"The infamous Foxe, and the not much more respectable Burnet, have so overlaid all the History of the Reformation with falsehood, that it has been well nigh impossible for ordinary readers to get at the facts." 27.

That I believe to be the true explanation of this astonishing state of affairs.

And now one word in conclusion.

What, it may be asked, is the practical utility of these researches into history?

I answer, (1) That it is the duty of every man to ascertain the truth. (2) That it is especially incumbent upon Catholics for their own satisfaction, to be able to shew categorically and definitely, that these charges, which are every day thrown in their faces, prove only the ignorance of those who make them. Moreover, the result of these investigations cannot be without its effect upon persons outside the Church, who for our immediate purpose, may be divided into three classes.

And here I desire to say that in this division I do not include that small number of large minded, cultured men,

a class not wholly unrepresented in the Protestant pulpits of this city;—men whose natural disposition and whose extensive reading alike protect them from the necessity of having recourse to such methods of controversy as the dissemination of the traditions we have been considering—men who, when they have occasion to allude to the Catholic Church, do so in language befitting her great place in the world's history. Excluding these persons then, the great majority fall into three classes.

(1) Those who take no interest whatever either in these traditions, or in their refutation. (2) Persons who are so fortified by their invincible prejudice that the clearest and most convincing argument serves only to irritate and annoy; (3) and lastly those, and I would fain believe their number is not inconsiderable, who are actuated by an honest desire to know the truth, and are disposed to deal fairly, even by the Catholic religion. To these persons I would say:—

Amid the multiplicity of jarring sects around you there stands forth an imposing figure which claims to be the sole exponent of God's revelation to man. Belonging exclusively to no nation or people, she is the mother of them all. For eighteen hundred years she has existed, despite the strenuous opposition of empires and of monarchies long since crumbled into dust. And now in the renewal of her immortal youth she is still sending forth her missionaries to the uttermost ends of the earth, and still meeting the attacks of hostile rulers in the same spirit as that in which she confronted Attila. Look at me, she seems to say,—is there anything under the wide canopy of heaven to compare with me, in unity, in majesty, in power? You seek truth. I am the pillar and ground of the truth. You seek light. I bear the Light of the world. You seek life. My mission is to guide men unto Life Eternal. Many calumnies have been uttered against me in the past. They and their authors are long since forgotten. Many calumnies are spoken against me to-day. As earthy vapours obscure the heavenly

bodies, so do these lying traditions, oft times repeated, conceal my face from you. You have been taught to believe that I have hidden away God's word for centuries—that I have resisted the progress of learning and of civilization—that I have flung a shadow over Europe for a thousand years. I need not the aid of any of my children to rebut these slanders. Open the histories of those times, written by men who never knelt at my altars, who lived and died outside my fold. I do not say that they represent me in all things as I am. Far from it. But unfriendly witnesses though they be, this much you will learn from them—that so far from having concealed the Holy Scriptures, but for me you would never have known the Sacred Book! Far from resisting the spread of knowledge, I have been its nursing mother! Far from opposing the progress of civilization, I have reclaimed all Europe from barbarism! Aye—and more than Europe. Centuries before my noisy detractors of to-day were born, my missionaries bore the gospel into these western lands, then an unknown wilderness; spent the best years of their lives in imparting it to savages, and for it joyously underwent the most cruel of deaths.

Learn these things from those who hated me, and when you have learned them, perhaps you will be disposed to a further enquiry, and so come to know that my doctrines and precepts have been no less misrepresented than has been my historic past!



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